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THE

COMICAL HISTORY

OF

SIMPLE JOHN

AND HIS

TWELVE MISFORTUNES,

WHICH HAPPENED ALL IN TWELVE DAYS AFTER THE UNHAPPY DAY OF HIS MARRIAGE.

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COMICAL HISTORY
OF
SIMPLE JOHN,
AND HIS
TWELVE MISFORTUNES.

SIMPLE JOHN was a widow's son, and a coarse country weaver to his trade. He made nothing but such as canvas for caff-beds, corn and coal sacks, drugget and harn was the finest webs he could lay his fingers to: he was a great lump of a lang, lean lad, aboon sax feet afore he was aughteen years auld; and, as he said himsel, he grew sae fast, and was in sic a hurry to be high, that he did not stay to bring a' his judgment with him, but yet he hoped it would follow him, and he would meet wi't as mony a ane does

after they're married. He had but ae sister, and she had as little sense as himsel', she was married on Sleeky Willie, the wylie weaver; his mither was a rattling rattle-scull'd wife, and they lived a' in ae house, and every body held them as a family of fools. When John came to man's estate, to the age of twenty-one years, he told his mither he would hae a wife o' some sort, either young or auld, widow or lass, if they had but heads and lips, tongue and tail, he should tak them, and weel I wat, mither, quoth he, they'll get a lumping penny-worth o' me, get me wha will.

His mither tells him o' the black butcher on Ti'ot-side, wha had three doughters, and every ane o' them had something, there was Kate, Ann, and Girzy, had a hundred merks the piece. Kate and Ann had baith bastards, Girzy the eldest had a humph back, a high breast, baker legged, a short wry neck, thrawn mouth, and goggle ey'd, a perfect Æsop of the female kind, with as many crooked conditions within as without, a very lump of loun-like ill-nature, row'd a' together, as if she had

been nine months in a haggis, a se
cond edition of crook backed Rich
ard, an old English King, that wa
born with teeth to bite a' around a
bout him, and yet the wight gaed ma
to be married.

John's mither told him the roa
where to go, and what to say, and ac
cordingly he sets out wi' his Sunday'
coat on, and a' his braws, and a pai
of new pillonian breeks o' his mither'
making. In he comes and tells hi
errand before he would sit down
says good day to you, goodman, wha
e you a' doing here? I am wantin
wife, an' ye're a flesher, and has a gud
rting aside you, my mither says y
n sair me or ony body like me, wha
say ye till't, goodman? How mon
douchters hae ye? Are they a' mar
ried yet? I fain wad tak a look o' som
o' them gin ye like.

A wow, said the goodwife, come i
by, honest lad, and rest ye, an ye b
a wooer sit down and gie's a snuff—
A deed, goodwife, I hae nae mills bu
my mither's, and it's at hame.—Whar
win ye, I'se no ken ye? I wat, quot

he, my name's Jock Sandyman, and they ca' me Simple John the sack weaver. I hae nae tocher but my loom, a pirn-wheel, a kettle, pat, a brass pan, twa pigs, four cogs, and a candlestick, a good cock, a cat, twa errocks new begun to lay; my sister Sara is married on Sleeky Willie the wylie weaver, and I maun hae a hagwife or my mither die, for truly she's very frail, and ony harl o' health she has is about dinner time; what say ye till't, goodman? can ye buckle me or not?

Goodman. A dear John, ye're in an unco haste, ye wadna hae your wife hame wi' ye? they're a' there before ye, which o' them will ye tak?

Hout, tout, says John, ony o' them will sair me, but my mither says there is twa o' them has fauts. And what is their fauts? says the goodwife. Hout, said John, it's no meikle faut, but I dinna like it, they got men or they were married. And what shall I do wi' them? said the goodman.

John. A deed, goodman, as ye're ay dealing among dead beasts and living beasts, I wad put them awa among

ither beasts, or gin ye be aun ony penny, let somebody tak them up o' desperate debt, I sud flie the fykes frae them, they anger'd you, and sham'd you baith with their bastards, a wheen daft jades it gets men or they be married, and bairns or they get bridals.

Goodwife. A wat weel that's true, lad.

Girzy. A weel, John, then, will ye tak me; I hae nae bastards; how will you and I do?

John. I wat na gin ye be able to get a bastard, yet ye may hae some waur faut; but ye maun be my pennyworth, for ye're unco little, and I'm o er muckle, and gin ye and I war ance carded through ither, we may get bonny weans o' a middlen mak. I hae nae fauts to ye, but ye hae a high breast, a humph back, a short neck, and high shouthers, the hands and legs may do, tho' your mouth be a wee to the tae side it will lie weel to the rock, and I hae a hantle o' tow to spin, will be baith sarks and sacks till us, ye'll be my soncy dauty, up and down; a perfect beauty wi' cat's yellow een, black brous, and

red lips, and your very nose is a purple colour; ye hae nae fauts at a'. Now, whan will we be married?

Girzy. Ha, ha, John lad, we maun think on that yet.

John. What the yeltow, lass, should na ye be ready whan I'm ready, and every body says that the woman's aye ready.

Goodman. Ye'll hae to come back and bring somebody wi' you, and we'll gree about it, and set the day whan ye'll be married.

John. A weel, goodman, I'll tell my mither o't, and come back on Mononday, and we'll hae a chappin o' ale, and roasted cheese on the chance o't, but I maun hae a word o' the bride out by, to convoy me, and a quiet speak to hersel about it.

Goodwife. A wow na, John, the daft loons will laugh at you, and she'll think shame, gang ye out by, and she'll speak to you through the gavel window.

Out goes John, and the bride, and her twa sisters goes to the window within to hear the diversion, and what

he would say. Now says John, Girzy my dear, my braw pretty woman, an ye be in earnest, tell me, for by my suth I'm no scorning.

Girzy. Indeed, John, I'm very willing to tak ye, but ye needna tell every body about it.

John. Then gie me a kiss on that. He shoves his head in at the window, making a lang neck to win down to her, and she stood on a little stool to win up to him. O, cries he, an ye were good flesh I could eat you a', I like you sae weel; it's a pity there is sic a hard wa' between us, I'se tell my mither sae bonny as ye are: O, gie me anither kiss yet, and then I'll go. One of her sisters standing by in a dark corner, gets haud o' a cow's head, which wanted a' the skin but about the mouth, and shoves it towards his mouth, which he kissed in the dark. O, cries he, your mouth be cauld since I kissed ye last, and I think ye hae a beard, I saw nae that before, or is't wi' spinning tow that maks your mouth sae rough at e'en.

Hame he comes, and tells his mither the speed and properties of the marriage.

All things was got ready, and next week Sleeky Willie the weaver and him came to gree the marriage, and stay all night with the bride, and teach John good manners, for when John was hungry, he minded his meat mair than his good behaviour, and he never was fu' till the dish was tume. Willie the weaver was to tramp on his fit when he thought he had suppet aneugh; so all things being agreed, upon short and easy terms, and the wedding day set, they were to be three times cried on Sunday, and quietly married on Monday, neither piper nor fiddler to be employ'd, but sweith awa hame frae the Minister, and into the bed amang the blankets; ha, ha, cried John, that's the best o't a'.

Now every thing being concluded and proposed, the supper was brought, a large fat haggis, the very smell wad a done a hungry body gude, but John had only got twa or three soups, until one of the butcher's meikle dogs tramped on John's fit, which he took to be the weaver, and then he would eat nae mair. After supper they went to bed

John and the weaver lay together, and then he abused the weaver for tramping sae soon, which he denied but O, said John, there's a hantle o' left, and I saw whare it was set; they are a'sleeping, I'll go rise and tak a soup o' yet. Aye, een do sae, said sleeky Willie, and bring a soup to me too. Away then John goes to the amry, and lays to the haggis, till his ain haggis could naud nae mair; then brought some to Sleeky Willie; but, instead of going to the bed where he was, goes to the bed where the bride and the twa sisters lay they being fast asleep, speaks slowly Will ye tak it, will ye tak it; but they making no answer, he turns up the blankets to put a soup into Willie's mouth, but instead of doing so, he puts a great spoonful close into one of their backsides. Sleeky Willie hears a' that past, comes out the bed, and sups out the remainder, and sets up the dish where it was, leaves the amry door open to let the cats get the blame of supping the haggis, and away they go to bed; but poor John could get nae sleep for drouth, up he gets in search of the

water-can, and finding an empty pitcher, puts in his hand to find if there was any water in it, but finding nane he closed his hand when it was within the pitcher, and then could not get it out, goes to the bed and tells Sleeky Willie what had happened him, who advised him to open the door, and gc out to a knocking-stane that stood before the door, and break it there, to get out his hand, and not to make a noise in the house. So out he goes, and the bride's sister who had gotten the great spoonful of the haggis laid to her backside, was out before him, rubbing the nastiness (as she took it to be) off the tail of her sark, and she being in a louting posture, he took her for the knocking-stane, and comes ower her hurdies with the pitcher, till it flew in pieces about her, then off she runs with the fright, round a turf-stack, and into the house before him. John came in trembling to the bed again, wi' the fright, praying to preserve him, for sic a knocking-stane he never yet saw, for it ran clean awa when he broke the pig upon it.

Now John was furnished in a house y his father-in-law; the bed, the loom, heddles, treadles, thrumbs, reed, and pirn-wheel, was a' brought and set up before the marriage, which was kept a profound secret; so that John got the first night of his ain wife, and his ain house at ae time. So on the next morning after the marriage, John and his wife made up some articles, how they were to work, and keep house; John was to keep the house in meat, meal, fire, and water; Girzy was to mak the meat, and keep the house in clothes; the father-in-law to pay the rent for three years; they were to hae nae servants, until they had children; and eir first child was to be a John, after ain Daddy, get it wha will, if a ; and if a girl, Girzy, after its ain y, as ye said wha wrought best

THEN she ordered John to rise and begin his wark, by putting on a fire, and to tak the twa new pigs and gang to the well for water. No sooner had John opened the door, and gone out with a pig in every hand, than a' the boys and girls being gathered in a crowd to see him, gave a loud huzza: and clapping their hands at him, poor John, not knowing what it meant, thought it was fine sport, began to clap his hands too, and not minding the twa pigs, clashes the tane against the tither, till baith went to pieces, and that was a cheerful huzza to baith young and auld that was looking at him; Girzy the wife draws him into the house, and to him she flies with the wicked wife's weapon, her Tongue and Tangs, and made his ribs to crack, saying, "They told me ye war daft, but I'll ding the daffing out o' ye, I'll begin wi' you as I've a mind to end wi' you." Poo John sat crying and clawing his hea

"Ha, ha," said he, its nae bairn s play to be married, I find that already." His mother-in-law came in and made up peace, went to a cooper, and got them a big wooden stoop to carry in their water.

MISFORTUNE II.

Next morning, John was sent to the Flesh-market an errand to his Father-in-law, who gave him a piece of flesh to carry home, and as he was coming out of the market, he saw six or seven of the flesher dogs fall on and worry at a poor country colly dog; "Justice, justice," cries John to the dogs, "ye're but a wheen unmannerly rascals, that fa's a' on ae poor beast, heth ye should a' be put in the toubuoth, and ta'en to the bailies, and hanged for the like o' that; its perfect murder;" and in he runs amongst the dogs, "And be hanged to you a' thegither, What's the quarrel? What's the quarrel? John flings down the flesh he had carrying, and grips the colly, who took John for an

enemy too, and bites his hands till the blood followed, the whole of the tykes comes a' on poor John, till down he goes in the dirt amongst their feet, and one of the dogs runs off with the flesh, so John went hame both dirty and bloody and without his flesh, told Girzy how it happened, who applied her old plaister, her Tangs and Tongue, made John to curse the very minister that married them, and wished he might ne'er do a better turn.

MISFORTUNE III.

Next morning, John was sent to the well with the great stoup to bring in water for breakfast; and as he was pulling the stoup out of the well, in he tumbles and his head down, the well being narrow, he couldna win out; some people passing by chance heard the slunge, cried, and ran to his relief, hauled him out half dead, and helped him into the house; and after getting a dry sark, he was comforted with the old plaister, her Tongue and hard Tangs.

MISFORTUNE IV.

Next day, she says, John, I must go to the market myself, for if you go you'll fight wi' the dogs, and let them run awa wi' ony thing you buy: see that ye put on the pat, hae't boiling again I come hame. John promised weel, but performs very badly. She's no sooner gone, than he puts on the new pat without any water in it, and a good fire to make it boil, and away he goes to the unhappy well, fills his stoup, and sets it down to look at a parcel of boys playing at cat and dog, they persuaded John to take a game wi' them, on he plays, till ane o' the boys cries, Hey John, yonders your Girzy coming. John runs into the house wi' the water, and the pat being red-hot on the fire, he tumes in the cauld water into it, which made the pat flee all in pieces, just as she was entering the door. John runs for it, and she runs after him, crying catch the thief, some persons stopped him; she comes

up, and then she laboured him all the way hame, and he crying, "O Sirs, ye see what it is to be married!" The mither-in-law had to make up peace again, and he promised good behaviour in time to come.

MISFORTUNE V.

On the next morning she sent him to the water to wash some cow's puddings and turn them on a spindle, showing him how he was to do or he went away. John goes to the water very willingly, and as he turned and washed them, he laid them down behind him, where one of his father-in-law's big dogs stood, and ate them up as fast as he laid them down, till all was gone but the very last ane, which he carried hame in his and, crying like a child, and under- ent a severe tost of the old plaister efore any mercy was shown.

MISFORTUNE VI.

His father-in-law, next day, sent him

away to bring home a fat calf he had bought in the country, and tied up the money in a napkin, which he carried in his hand for fear he should lose it. Being very weighty, as it was all in half-pence, and as he was going along a bridge, he meets a man running after a horse, who cries to John to stop the horse; John meets him on the top of the bridge, and when he would not be stopped for him, he knocks the horse on the face with the napkin and the money, so the napkin gave, and most of the half-pence flew over the bridge in the water, which made poor John go home crying very bitterly for his loss, and dread of the old plaister, which he got very sickerly.

MISFORTUNE VII.

On the next morning, she sent him again to the bridge, to see if he could find any of it in the water, and there he found some ducks swimming, and ducking down with their heads below the water, as he thought, gathering up his money, he kills one of them, and flips

her up, but found none of it in her guts or gabbie; then says he, they have been but looking for it, I'll go do as they did, strips off his clothes and leaves them on the bridge, goes in a ducking, in which time, a ragman came past, and took away all his clothes. So he went home naked to get a bath of the old plaister.

MISFORTUNE VIII.

The next morning, she sent him to a farm-house for a pigful of buttermilk, and as he was returning through the fields, the farmer's bull and another bull were fighting; the farmer's bull being like to loss, John runs in behind him, and sets his head to the bull's tail, on purpose to help him to push against the other; but the poor bull thought John was some other bull attacking him behind, fled aside, and the other bull came full drive upon John, pushed him down, broke the pig, and spilt the milk. So John went home to get his auld plaister, which began to be a usual diet to him, and so he regarded it the less.

MISFORTUNE IX.

His mother-in-law, with several auld witty wives, held a private council on John's conduct, and bad luck, and concluded he was bewitched. John was of the same opinion, and went to the Minister, and told him he was the cause of a' his misfortunes, ca'd him a warlock to his face, and said, he had put such a black bargain into his hand, that he was ruined for ever; insisted either to unmarry them again, or send death and the bellman to take her awa, for she has a lump of mischief on her back and anither on her breast, and the rest of her body is a clean de'il. The Minister began to exhort him to peace and patience, telling him that marriages were made in heaven: "ye're a baist liar," says John, "for I was married in your ain kitchen, and a' the blackguards in the town were there, an it had a been a heaven they wadna win in, yet tell me that matrimony was sic a happy state, but had ye gotten as mony weel

pay'd skins as I hae gotten, ye wad a kend what it was; ill chance on you, sir;" and out he goes cursing like a madman, throwing stanes and breaking the Minister's windows for which he was caught and put twa hours in the stocks, and at last his lump of corruption came and rubbed his lugs, drew his nose, got him out, and drove him home before her, took a resolution never to set him about any business in time coming, but keep him on his loom.

MISFORTUNE X.

Now she gave him no sleep all that night for scolding. John got up in the morning lang or day, and left his Tormenter in bed, fell asleep upon his loom wi' the candle in his hand, and so set the web, heddles, reed, and treadle cords in a fire. By chance his old Viper looked out of the bed, or the whole house had been gone. Up she gets, and with her cries alarmed the neighbourhood who came to her relief;

but poor John underwent a dreadful swabbing for this.

MISFORTUNE XI.

After the former hurry and beating being over, his work being stopt, he went to bed and slept a' that day, and following night. On the next day, having nothing to do, she sent him in search of a hen's nest, which had ta'en some by-place to lay her eggs in: so as poor John was in an auld kill searching a' about the walls, the kill-ribs broke, and down he goes with a vengeance into the logie, cutted and bruised himself in a terrible manner; up he could not win, but had to creep out at the logie below, scarce able to get hame, his face and nose all running of blood. In this condition she pitied and lamented for him very much, tied his sores and laid him in bed; then sat down very kindly, saying, "My dear, and my lamb, do you think there is ony of your banes broken; and what part of you is sairest?" And what will I get

o do good? "Oh!" said he, "Girzy, 'm a' brizzled atween the feet." "Are e indeed?" quoth she, "then I wish e had broken your neck, that I might gotten anither, useless ae way, and useless mae ways, upo' my word, ye's no be here, gang whare ye like."

MISFORTUNE XII.

Now, as poor John was turned out o' doors next morning, to go awa' hirpling on a staff; one came and told him his mother had died last night. Oh ioch! said John, and is my mither clean dead! O an she wad but look down through the lift, and see how I'm guided this morning, I'm sure she wad send leath for me too. I'm out o' a mither nd out o' a wife, out o' my health and trength, and a' my warklooms. His nother-in-law came and pleaded for im: Haud your tongue, mither, said Girzy, if ye kent what ail'd him ye wadna speak about him, he's useless, no worth the keeping in a house, but to ca' him to die like an auld beast at a dyke-

side. Hout tout, co' the auld wife, we'll mak o' him and he'll mend again. So John got peace made up after a', and he was easier mended than the burnt web; got all his treadles and warklooms set in order, the wife's tongue excepted, which was made of wormwood, and the rest of her body of sea water, which is always in a continual tempest.

So John appeals to a Jedburgh Jury if it be not easier to deal wi' fools than headstrong fashious fouks; owns he has but an empty skull, but his wicked wife wants wit to pour judgment into it never tells him o' danger till it comes upon him, for his mother said he was a biddable bairn, if ony body had been to learn him wit.

FINIS.